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# WHY LINCOLN IS LOVED.

A Man of the People.—His Poverty and Honesty.—His Homely Appearance and Bearing.—His 'Superb Intellect.—A Man of Humility and Kindliness.—The Sort of Partisan He Was.—Lincoln's Religion.—Personal Courage and Political Sagacity.—The Lesson of His Death.

By Amos R. Wells.



THOUGHT the common agreement of all Americans still places the Father of our Country on the highest pedestal of peaceful and military valor, undoubtedly Abraham Lincoln, the centenary of whose birthday we celebrate this week, has iron the chief place in all true American hearts. He has become our popular American hero, our typical American, so that if we were asked to point to the proudest product of our institutions, the noblest growth of our soil, without hesitation we would speak his much-loved name.

No wonder there must be a reason for this. It is not in the nature of the American people, as it is in the nature of the French, passionately and sometimes unreasonably to adore any man. Why is it that we love and honor Abraham Lincoln? I find one dozen answers to this question.

**I.** WE honor and love him, in the first place, because he was a man of the people,—of the common people. Such Washington was not. This grace Lincoln owes to his shiffliness, riving, story-telling father, that unweary pioneer of three States. Lincoln was born into the family of a common day-laborer, a man who would neither read nor write, and yet a man, for all his improvidence and ignorance, whom everybody loved.

This grace, too, he owed his dear little Christian mother, whose early death so grieved him. "All that I am or hope to be," he afterwards said, "I owe to my angel mother,—blessings on her memory."

Born, then, from the humblest of common folk, and never lifted too high for loving and respectful care for them, our typical American may rightly be honored because he was a man of the people.

**II.** AMERICANS love Abraham Lincoln, in the second place, because he was poor. Say what you may of his office frequently and shamefully purchased by full purses and empty heads, it remains true that the idols of the popular heart have ever been poor men.

Lincoln's early life was what he himself called it when asked for facts for his campaign biography,—"the short and simple annals of the poor."

He knew what it meant to be hungry and cold in a miserable log-cabin; to sleep on benches on a punchen floor, the skins at the entrance but a poor substitute for a door; to go ragged and barefoot.

For years that ungainly, homely figure, flax trousers tight at the ankles, out at both knees, trudged steadily over the Illinois prairie to his daily task, a walk of six or seven miles, perhaps, to ploughing or rail-splitting,—a common day-laborer like his father.

Four hundred rails to split for every yard of valiant-dyed brown jeans that wrung to the make-up of a new pair of trousers!

He was always poor. Elected to the legislature of his State, the future president trudged the one hundred miles to the State capital with his pack on his back, and returned in the same manner, no richer by his sojourn. Yes, and re-elected, he repeated the same journey on foot.

His famous rail-splitter's campaign, inaugurated by the dramatic presentation of the historic rails to the Decatur convention, set Mr. Lincoln before the country as a poor man, and Lincoln is said to have regretted the adoption of that symbol, his lack of advantage for the best development of his powers.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Abraham Lincoln always wished that he had had more of school and less of rail-splitting, and was so painfully conscious of his inferiority in this direction that he was even over-sensitive on the point. And it was many a long month after his election before the people at large learned that their rail-splitter President had had also a man of genuine culture and trust intellectual power.

Of course, I need not say that Abraham Lincoln was never ashamed of the poverty which he ever regretted. He was interrupted once in the midst of an important political speech by this question from the crowd: "Mr. Lincoln, is it true that you entered this State barefoot, driving a yoke of oxen?"

Lincoln paused a moment, overwhelmed by the shameless offrontrous of such a question, then answered with a twinkle in his eye, "I think I can prove the fact by at least a dozen men in this crowd, any one of whom is more respectable than you, sir!" and then passed on to an eloquent eulogy of the free institutions which had made possible for him that advance from the barefoot ox-driver to the position he then held in the councils of his State.

And truly this is why we love Abraham Lincoln for his poverty: because that poverty and his glorious emergence therefrom are but a hint to us of the glory of free institutions and free labor.

**III.** WE love Abraham Lincoln, too, because he was honest,—absolutely trustworthy in all particulars.

We all know about that adventurous voyage on which he was treated in his youth, to pilot his milk boat with its cargo eighteen hundred miles to New Orleans, and bring back the profits.

When he became clerk in that role

pioneer store, run remember how he walked six miles one day to return an over-charge of six cents and a quarter. And how at another time, finding that he had received out a quarter of a pound of tea, and too little, he closed his store forthwith, and set out on a long walk to make it right.

He went into business for himself, at last, with a discredited partner, who "winked out," in Abraham Lincoln's words, "and left him with the national debt on his hands." Do you imagine that a dollar of that debt was left unpaid?

He was postmaster for some years, carrying the office around in his hat, where any one might find his letter who could find him; and when the government officers came to settle accounts and called for a certain sum as his due after his term, how did he pull out the exact amount, carefully wrapped up in a separate bundle, remarking that he never mixed his money with any one else's.

And when he became a lawyer and had a partner, every fee that came to him was instantly divided, his partner's share wrapped up in a separate piece of paper, and labelled with his partner's name.

Small matters, these, you say? Possibly, but the lack of the spirit they illustrate in our private and business men has cost the country millions upon millions of dollars, and saddened many a home.

Abraham Lincoln was too honest to make much money at law. He treated his clients as friends, often forgiving their debts to him, and sometimes not only charging no fees, but giving them large sums to help them on.

He would never accept a case if he did not think his client in the right. He advised many a man that his cause was poor, and that he should keep out of law.

If in the middle of a suit he found his

client to be in the wrong, he dropped the case. If his partner intimated it, he touched no part of the fee.

Once when his client deceived him and he learned that he was on the wrong side, he charged the jury to give a verdict against his client.

Once when a verdict was given which was not as favorable to the other side as he knew it to be just, he interposed, insisting that his opponent had been allowed too little. The establishment of absolute justice seemed to be his one aim and passion.

No wonder that, with these principles, he hardly made as much money in his years of hard work as an unscrupulous lawyer would make in a twelve-month.

Rightly was he called "Honest Abe," and rightly do men love him for his honesty, and rightly would we pray for a double portion of this old-fashioned quality to distribute among some of our present politicians.

**IV.** IN the fourth place, men love Abraham Lincoln because he was humble.

I do not mean to imply that good looks are an obstacle to political success, but I do believe that that long, awkward, ungainly form he thrust more clearly and deeply on our minds because of its length and awkwardness and ungainliness. We should like him less if his hands and his feet had been smaller, and if he had better known what to do with them.

These long arms, stretched so portentously before his audacious, were strong and sturdy for their limbs. These large hands were clean from the delinquency of political corruption. Every inch of his homely height of six and a quarter feet was manly.

His dress was clumsy and careless and shabby, partly from poverty and partly from neglect, but how a tailor would have spoiled that quaint yet dignified figure! Just because he was so man for the drawing-room, for velvet carpets and an elegant setting, the great masses of men who crowded him in drawing-room elegance, was drawn to him.

Even his strong, athletic body, supreme among the wrestlers in the whole army of the Black Hawk campaign, tempered in the stern presence of poverty, almost faded under the successful pressure of a nation's prolonged agony. What if we had had some pre-presidential at that dread crisis, with Lincoln profile and suit hands all closely glued?

As that most unutterably sad of all funeral processions wound its way that evening April, and the thousands and tens of thousands looked through blinding tears for the last time on the worn white face, his homely features were radiant, to them, with a beauty rarely seen on earth.

**V.** AND again, we love and honor Abraham Lincoln because he was a man of brains.

If schools alone make education, he was never educated, for the ill-fated frog that swam his school-days would scarcely foot up a single year. If ever a great man came direct from God's hand, unwrought upon by human help, that man was Lincoln.

General Grant gave me a grounding in his show, and every succeeding condition of his year, his school, his downward. Yet in his first school, in three months, he learned to write a letter. And then he became the letter-writer for the neighbor hood, and learned the use of his own language in the best way,—by the thoughtful use of it for others.

And then, for vocabulary, he knew much





which is greater, perhaps, than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of divine providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same divine aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support; and I hope you, my friends, will pray that I may receive that divine assistance without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain."

On one occasion, in a private conversation, he drew out a pocket Testament, and with that in his hand said, his voice trembling, his cheeks wet with tears: "I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the situation coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me, and I think He has—I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God. I have said that the house divided against itself cannot stand, and Christ and reason say the same; and they will find it so. Douglas doesn't care whether slavery is voted up or voted down, but God cares, and humanity cares, and I care, and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not win, but I know it will come, and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright."

In his proclamations appointing religious services of thanksgiving after every important victory of the war, in his emancipation proclamation, he said solemnly, and final, in his inaugural and his messages to Congress, in short, in all his state papers, there breathed a spirit of most sincere and exalted piety.

At the cabinet meeting preceding the promulgation of the preliminary proclamation of emancipation he said solemnly, "I have promised my God that I will do it." "I have been driven many times to the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. . . . I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool, if I for one day thought that I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place without the aid and enlightenment of One who is wiser and stronger than all others."

Before a committee of prominent gentlemen gave audience to this statement: "If it were not for my belief in an overruling Providence, it would be difficult for me, in the midst of such complications of affairs, to keep my reason on its seat. But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the wisest and best for us. I have always taken counsel of Him and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation."

In a circular letter to the army, urging the soldiers to the better observance of the Sabbath, he used these words: "The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day or the name of the Most High."

A man who, in addition to an unblemished life in the eyes of the world, has learned to trust in Providence, to honor the Bible, to respect the Sabbath, to pray, to worship God, and love Christ, is a true Christian, whether formally so or not. For his Christian character we honor Abraham Lincoln.

## X.

WE love him, next, because he was a brave man. Whatever was to be done he did without fear.

When a boy he had to ride fifty miles to the nearest grist-mill, which his own horse had to turn when it came his turn to grind. He was marching along behind the animal, urging it by clucks in its monotonous round, when it suddenly rebbled and kicked him senseless. As soon as he came to, Abraham finished his kick which the kick had interrupted.

When he was clerk in that pioneer store

he lally came in one day and tried to provoke him to fight. When he saw that there was no help for it he decided that he might as well teach the fellow a lesson as anybody. took him out-of-doors, and held him down while he rubbed saltwater into his skin and eyes until repentance came. Then he tenderly helped him wash the saltwater out. The man became a better man, and his firm friend.

Lincoln was one of the very first to enlist in the Black Hawk war, and was risked a certain of his company, over his former employer.

He was ready to fight a duel once, to shield a lady who had anonymously written and published some rash political verses; but the duel was prevented by friends.

He cared more than one speaker from the anger of enraged audiences, boldly confronting the mob with him.

He was one of the few lawyers of the country who dared to take unpopular negro cases.

His management and triumphant winning of the famous trial of his old friend Armstrong, indicted for murder, is well known, being utilized by Eggleston in one of his most dramatic novels.

Amid countless threats of assassination he dared constantly to walk the streets of Washington by night and unarméd; and after Richmond fell he was one of the first civilians to enter the city, almost unguarded.

But his personal bravery was hidden beneath the splendors of his spiritual daring. He was so quiet and unpretending that he was long in learning the back of his unassuming manner was a will as anything as Grant's, when once his mind was fixed; a courage that feared no danger; an absolute firmness in the right, as God gave him to see the right.

God alone knows how this land would have fared through the wild surges of that most troubled sea, had a weaker pilot been at the helm. For his bravery, then, we honor him.

## XI.

WE love him, too, for his wisdom. He had the ruler's admirable gift, talent in dealing with men, in soothing events.

You remember the dignified warnings, firm yet conciliatory, of his first inaugural. You remember how his watchful care preserved this of the order States for the Union. Nothing but his bold front toward foreign sympathizers with the South prevented their recognition of the Southern confederacy.

How wise he was in dealing with men! How sensible was his conduct toward the vain and the strong President! How well he managed the bluff old patriot Sumner! With what infinite patience he bore with McClellan's petulance and caution and dallying! How able was his acknowledgment to Grant that he was himself in the wrong!

Recall his firmness during the trying scenes of the draft, his dispassionate dignity in the affair of Mason and Slidell, his noble endurance of the petty stings and harangues of the peace party.

In the supreme matter of slavery, holding the course from his heart, feeling bound to give it under the constitution until the very life of the nation required its removal, how for months he waited, refusing back his proclamation, assailed on all hands by impatient abolitionists, until military necessity justified him in the breach of the constitution!

And after the emancipation proclamation how anxious was he, by schemes of gradual emancipation, of payment for slaves, of colonization outside our borders, to prevent all future disturbance from that source!

How firmly through all the war he held to the real vital issues, which no one else saw so clearly, and with what wisdom did he direct our fortunes to his clearly seen goal!

Through all the confusion and whirling ferrets of that time there was one centre of power and unswerving purpose—a plain, quiet man in a plain room at Washington. His wisdom saved our country, and for that we love him.

## XII.

AND lastly, we love Abraham Lincoln because he died in our service.

Before his immigration, lying on a lounge one day, his mirror showed him two images of his face, the upper one very pale. His nervous wife interpreted this as a sign of a fatal second lesion.

"Whichever way this war ends," said he once to Mrs. Stowe, "I have the impression that I shall not last long after it is over." This prophecy revives in our nation's memory a sorrow we can never forget. Since the assassination, three centuries ago, of the great German dramatist, William the Silent, no man so noble and so honored had so sadly fallen.

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## Some Lincoln Memorials in Washington.

The Simplicity of That Great Life.—Three Hundred Portraits.—The Family Bible and Other Precious Relics.—A Great Little Desk.

By Susan Hunter Walker.

WE are all very apt to think that because we do not have things just as suitable and convenient and as Washington as we should like them we cannot do our very best work. A visit to the Lincoln Museum in Washington should cure us most effectively of this mistaken idea. There are gathered together many hundreds of things that belonged to Abraham Lincoln or were connected with him from his birth, he hunted years ago on the twelfth of February, until his death. What strikes one almost painfully is the extreme plainness of everything.

The Lincoln Museum occupies the house on Fourth Street in which the martyred President was carried from the theatre in which he was assassinated that April night in 1865. The house is a rather unattractive three-story brick building, very much like its commonplace neighbors on either side. The only difference is that the sign hanging from the front porch tells you that it is the house in which Abraham Lincoln died.

When you stop within the narrow hallway, you will step short at once to glance over the three hundred portraits covering the walls of the passage and picturing the face you know so well, and which you love if you have studied much the life of the great man been a century ago in a little Kentucky log cabin. They are all more or less alike, their chief variation being one of quality, for some are good and some are not. If you are like me, you will most carefully study the small portrait of Lincoln as a young man. This was done before he became at all famous and familiar, and is said by those who remember him to be a good likeness.

Some other photographs of the War President and his family and nearest friends, with pictures of all their various homes, hang in the front room of the Museum, with busts and statues, all showing the rugged, gentle, pathetic face we so admire. Over the mantel hangs the United States flag that draped his coffin on the night of his assassination. In it you can see the spot that was made by the spur of the man who slew him, for his heart caught in the flag as he jumped from box to stage.

Many other things are here, but you will like to see the family Bible, nearly a hundred years old, from which his mother read to little Abraham. If you look on the fly-leaf, you will

"Oh, the pity of it! The pity of it!" she cried as their sad hearts followed the still white face on its last progress through the nation.

Why was Abraham Lincoln's grand life so mournfully closed? The answer, I should think, is clear as daylight now,—that it might, with all other glories, receive the crown of usefulness, the honor of proving to the world that a republic, even by the greatest political will, a civil war, and victories in that, can endure the very efflux of horrors without disintegration. That is the chief lesson of his death, in us and in the nations of the earth.

Boston, Mass.

new his name, written very sparingly. It looks as if it had been done when he was a very small boy, and was probably written as he leaned at his mother's knee while she read to him the sweet Bible stories.

There are many other books that belonged to Lincoln as a boy and as a man; but the most fascinating, I think, is a copy of the life of George Washington, written by that curious old historian, Parson Weems. We will not stop to discuss this old life now, but we shall be attracted to this particular copy of it because it is that from which one great American read the life of the greatest American. There is no saying what influences this shabby little book had upon the future career of Lincoln.

There is, too, a story about this volume that is much too interesting to be omitted from even this short sketch. Lincoln, as you know, was a very pure boy, and he lived in a very humble little home. He had few books of his own, so he borrowed all he could. He had asked the loan of this life of Washington from a neighbor, and he probably read it by the light of the kitchen fire, for we know that he studied in that way. When he went to bed, he used to stick this book between the legs of the sofa, away up above the reach of the snoring children. One night it rained, and the rain coming in between the logs damaged the book. Young Lincoln took it directly over to his neighbor, and showed him the injury done. His friend told him he could keep the spoiled volume and repair the loss by working for



The Lincoln Museum in Washington, being the house in which the martyred President died

